

Soviets Seen Strongly Against Arms Parley

By Michael Geider
Washington Post Staff Writer

American experts on defense and Soviet affairs, who have just returned from informal meetings with top officials in Moscow, report that the Kremlin appears to have decided not to resume suspended nuclear arms talks until the Reagan administration demonstrates with "clear deeds" that it is serious about reaching agreements.

One member of the so-called "Dartmouth Group," a private group whose various members have been meeting with Soviet officials annually for some 20 years, said he had "never seen the atmosphere so bad. They [the Soviets] don't want to talk about any kind of arms control."

"They were very negative, very rigid and showed no interest in even probing for possible openings," added another member.

Another said he was surprised by the Soviet rigidity because it came just a month or so after some relatively moderate public remarks by the new Soviet leader Konstantin U. Chernenko and after some apparently less strident comments to two visiting U.S. senators earlier this month.

It was the overwhelmingly negative Soviet attitude at the five-day meeting last week, several members said, that led to the feeling that Moscow now has completed its assessment of the situation, since Chernenko took office Feb. 13, and has decided against any quick arms control deals which might help Reagan get reelected.

Although the American visitors are private citizens and do not speak for the administration, they are a

high-powered group that includes retired Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, who headed President Reagan's commission on U.S. strategic nuclear forces; retired Gen. David C. Jones, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and two leading U.S. ex-

See ARMS, A20, Col. 1

Kremlin Is Seen Opposed to Arms Talk

ARMS, From A1

parts on the Soviet Union, Arnold Horelick of the Rand Corp. and William Hyland of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Leading the group was Paul Doty, director of the center for science and international affairs at Harvard.

Their Soviet counterparts included Georgi Arbatov, senior Kremlin adviser on U.S. affairs; Lt. Gen. Viktor P. Starodubov, a member of the Soviet general staff; A.A. Obukov, deputy chief of the Soviet delegation to the strategic arms reduction talks (START), and Valentin M. Falin, a former ambassador to West Germany.

The Soviet views have been relayed to the White House and may account in part for Reagan's comments to a French magazine on Wednesday that "some of the rhetoric coming out of Moscow is less than encouraging. Nonetheless," Reagan added, "I remain hopeful."

Sources close to the Dartmouth group stressed that there is no way to be sure that the Soviets had made an official decision not to return to either of the suspended Geneva negotiations on long-range missiles and bombers known as START and the INF talks dealing with medium-range missiles in Europe.

Nonetheless, they said, "now all the signs are sharply negative" and that their assessment is shared by the U.S. ambassador to Moscow, Arthur Hartman.

They also said they did not know what, if anything, was going on in so-called "back channel" private communications between officials.

There have been a number of meetings between Hartman and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko and between Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin. But aside from these, Hartman said yesterday on the NBC-TV "Today" show, there are no back-channel talks going on.

Officials said that a Hartman-Gromyko meeting about 10 days ago was "an hour and a half of unrelieved vitriol" paralleling what the Dartmouth group members heard.

U.S. sources said the Soviets appear both stung and extremely defensive over the ability of the United States and the NATO allies to go ahead with deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe this winter despite strong protests by Moscow and European peace movements.

The Soviets, who walked out of both talks after deployments began, told their visitors that the Pershings are aimed at knocking out their military command posts and that Reagan's new emphasis on anti-missile defense suggests that the United States is seeking a one-two punch to neutralize Soviet missile forces.

Although Moscow has fielded 378 new SS20 missiles aimed at Europe and Asia, the Soviets charged that Washington was changing the strategic balance by deploying the new missiles in Europe which could reach Soviet territory. They claimed this was a violation of the untified 1979 SALT II strategic arms limitation agreement that both sides pledged to uphold.

The Soviets reportedly said that Washington only engaged in INF talks to cover the deployment and that there was no point in further INF talks until the deployment was reversed. Sources said the Soviets rejected inquiries from the visitors about whether there would be renewed interest in Moscow in the so-called "in the woods" formula worked out informally in 1982 by the U.S. and Soviet chief INF negotiators. That formula later was officially rejected by both sides.

The Soviets also reportedly rejected inquiries about merging the INF and START talks and indicated it was unreasonable to resume START negotiations without settling the shipping and cruise missile problem. The Soviets also showed no interest in a congressional-backed "build-down" scheme for reducing existing weapons, calling it a coverup permit introduction of more modern weapons.

"We got stonewalled on all of them," a group member said. The Soviets, another member said, are clearly in a "hold" on arms control and are letting this country know.

Despite recent conciliatory speeches by Reagan, the predominant view of visitors is that the Soviets remain deeply distrustful of the United States and view his remarks as meant for domestic consumption.

Aside from reversing the new missile deployment, the Soviets have cited as "deeds" that would show good faith: ratification of the 1974 underground nuclear threshold test ban treaty and reaching accords on prohibition of anti-ellite weapons and chemical warfare.

W. Post, 23 Mar 84